

BURMA BULLETIN

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- **UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs Gambari visits Burma in an atmosphere of continued human rights violations. Following his report to the UN Security Council, the US readies UNSC Resolution on Burma.**
- **NLD members continue to be harassed, intimidated, and jailed but membership in the pro-democracy party increases. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets Gambari and receives medical checkup after almost three months.**
- **Prominent student leaders are charged in Rangoon under article 5J of the Emergency Provision Act.**
- **Burma is the world's second most corrupt country. The junta cracks down on corrupted bureaucrats and high-ranking officials but also jails citizens who complain about corruption practices.**
- **The SPDC Army military offensive in Eastern Burma continues, killing and displacing civilians, destructing property, and laying landmines.**
- **SPDC shuts down ICRC field offices in Burma and end talks on resuming prison visits. ICRC condemns the move and considers pulling out.**
- **ILO prepares to take SPDC before the International Court of Justice because of continued forced labor violations.**
- **New Thai PM tells Soe Win that he wants to end the problems of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand.**
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KEY STORY

Gambari returns to Burma as SPDC trashes human rights

When Ibrahim Gambari, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, visited Burma in May of 2006, the SPDC extended the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for another year shortly after his departure. As the time approached for Gambari's second visit to Burma in November, the political climate and behavior of the SPDC remained unchanged.

The SPDC arrested and charged five prominent "88 Generation" student leaders.¹ [See Student leaders jailed] In late October, the SPDC issued an order to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) to close all of five of their field offices.² [See Prison visits: ICRC out, USDA in] In addition, the SPDC ignored a 31 October deadline imposed by the ILO for reaching agreement on a mutually

¹ Irrawaddy (03 Nov 06) Junta warns of action against student group

² IRNA (28 Nov 06) Burma 'closes' Red Cross offices

acceptable procedure to process complaints on forced labor³ and had also failed to release all prisoners that were incarcerated because they brought forced labor matters to the attention of the ILO.⁴ [See ILO Considers Referring Burma to International Court of Justice]

The SPDC tightly controlled Gambari's visit. Gambari requested to check in at the Sedona Hotel in downtown Rangoon, but the SPDC put him in a State guest house. Gambari reportedly asked that his meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi take place in her lakeside house but the regime refused.⁵ Gambari wanted to meet with ethnic opposition leaders. Instead, the SPDC took him to observe the proceedings of the National Convention in Nyaungnabin. Gambari's visit to the National Convention was an obvious effort by the SPDC to legitimize its "roadmap for democracy".

Gambari's schedule during his four day visit involved numerous meetings, most of which involved SPDC officials. In his meeting with SPDC officials, Gambari stressed the need for concrete positive results in key areas namely: the need to make the road map political process more transparent and inclusive, the release of political prisoners, the question of humanitarian access, and the situation in the Karen State.⁶

- **10 November:** Gambari met with Lt Gen Thein Sein, SPDC First Secretary and Chairman of the National Convention Covering Commission. He also met with National Convention delegates when he observed the on-going session of the National Convention at Nyaungnabin.⁷
- **11 November:** Gambari met with SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe in Naypyidaw.⁸ At his meeting with Sr Gen Than Shwe, Gambari delivered a letter from the UN Sec-Gen, Kofi Annan, that reiterated his appeal for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁹ After the meetings with the junta chief, Mr. Gambari met members of the NLD's Central Executive Committee.¹⁰ [See NLD activities continue] In the evening, Gambari met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹¹ [See Daw Suu meets Gambari, receives medical checkup]
- **13 November:** the day after he departed Burma, Gambari said, "The outcome of my visit, and the concrete results, are still being awaited. The ball is clearly back in the court of the authorities."¹²
- **27 November:** Gambari briefed the UN Security Council on his trip.¹³

INSIDE BURMA

Daw Suu meets Gambari, receives medical checkup

On 11 November, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi under tight security at a state guesthouse in Rangoon.¹⁴ After the one-hour meeting, the UN released photos of the pro-democracy leader, believed to be the first seen by the outside world since her latest detention began in May 2003.¹⁵ "She is reasonably well, considering that she has been in detention for 10 of the last 17 years or so," Gambari said the day after the meeting. "She has concern not only about her own welfare but the welfare of the people of Myanmar, all of them," he added. Gambari's comment followed up on a statement issued by the United Nations on 11 November, which said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had conveyed to Gambari that she is in "good health but requires more regular medical visits."¹⁶

³ Irrawaddy (25 Oct 06) ILO advisor concludes Burma visit

⁴ Irrawaddy (01 Aug 06) ILO Deadline Passes on Forced Labor Prosecutions

⁵ Irrawaddy (15 Nov 06) In Burmese politics, safety comes first

⁶ Asian Tribune (10 Nov 06) UN official visits Myanmar

⁷ Xinhua (11 Nov 06) Myanmar top leader meets UN senior official

⁸ Xinhua (11 Nov 06) Myanmar top leader meets UN senior official

⁹ Mizzima News (14 Nov 06) UN reiterates appeal for Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom

¹⁰ Mizzima News (11 Nov 06) Gambari meets Aung San Suu Kyi

¹¹ Swissinfo.org (11 Nov 06) U.N. envoy says Myanmar's Suu Kyi healthy

¹² Financial Times (13 Nov 06) UN envoy urges Burma to ease tensions

¹³ Reuters (27 Nov 06) US wants UN Council action against Myanmar's junta

¹⁴ AFP (12 Nov 06) Myanmar hopes pressure will ease with Aung San Suu Kyi meeting

¹⁵ Reuters (11 Nov 06) U.N. envoy says Myanmar's Suu Kyi healthy

¹⁶ AP (12 Nov 06) Nobel laureate under house arrest in Myanmar needs more medical attention: U.N. official

On 16 November, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's personal physician doctor Tin Myo Win performed an ultrasound medical checkup on the Nobel laureate, and results seemed to indicate she was in good health.¹⁷ Doctor Tin Myo Win's previous visit to the pro-democracy leader had taken place on 24 August, despite the junta's assurances that the Nobel laureate has unhindered access to her personal physician at least once a month and whenever she needs treatment.¹⁸

NLD activities continue

The campaign of harassment, intimidation, and unfounded accusations directed at the National League for Democracy (NLD) members by the SPDC continued throughout November.

- **3 November:** state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reported that the NLD Mandalay division had denounced the prayer campaign led by the 88 generation students as "meaningless and shameful.' However, NLD divisional organizer in Mandalay, Win Mya Mya, rejected the report saying that the Mandalay NLD supported the prayer campaign.¹⁹
- **12 November:** the Tharawaddy Township Court sentenced NLD member Ko Win Ko and his friend Ko Phyto Zaw Latt to 14 years of imprisonment each for collecting fake signatures during the October campaign led by the 88 generation students.²⁰
- **13 November:** a report in the New Light of Myanmar accused NLD party members of interfering in the prosecution of a lawsuit against a local official in Rangoon's Kawhmu Township. Allegations of judicial interference were dismissed as untrue by NLD spokesperson Nyan Win and right activist Su Su Nway, who was also criticized in the New Light of Myanmar report.²¹

Despite SPDC claims that participation in the NLD has waned, membership in the pro-democracy party has been increasing. "The number of new recruits has increased even more especially since they started frequently carrying news in the newspapers about NLD members resigning. For instance, membership in Rangoon Division is increasing quite a lot. The same is true for Magwe Division," NLD spokesperson Nyan Win said. The NLD said that new membership was increasing in Rangoon Division's Dawbon Township, with the party branch accepting 31 new members in the month of October alone.²²

The NLD also continued to carry out its political activities.

- **1 November:** members and elected MPs of the NLD in Meikhtila, Mandalay Division, held their monthly meeting.²³
- **4 November:** NLD members held a peace vigil in Rangoon under the eye of some 20 plain-clothed security officers.²⁴
- **11 November:** members of the NLD central executive committee met with UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari. They reportedly discussed problems related to national reconciliation, the junta's ongoing national convention, the role of the UN in implementing the UN general assembly's resolution on Burma, and humanitarian assistance. The NLD, however, expressed their dissatisfaction with Gambari meeting only a few people rather than Burma's various political groups.²⁵
- **14 November:** on occasion of Burma's National Day, the NLD organized a ceremony at its headquarters in Rangoon. The party issued a statement calling for national reconciliation, a meeting

¹⁷ Irrawaddy (17 Nov 06) Suu Kyi receives ultrasound checkup; Narinjara News (17 Nov 06) Doctor confirmed Suu Kyi in good health

¹⁸ AP (04 Nov 06) Report: Politics keep Suu Kyi's personal doctor away from her for 2 months; Irrawaddy (02 Nov 06) Junta Denies Blocking Doctor's Access to Suu Kyi; AFP (02 Nov 06) Aung San Suu Kyi's doctor wants her to receive ultrasound: police

¹⁹ Mizzima News (03 Nov 06) Mandalay NLD set to test junta's rule of law

²⁰ DVB (13 Nov 06) Two organizers of Burma signature campaign said to get 14-year jail terms

²¹ Irrawaddy (13 Nov 06) Junta says NLD 'meddling in judicial affairs'

²² DVB (09 Nov 06) Membership of Burma's NLD increasing despite "intimidation"

²³ DVB (01 Nov 06) Meikhtila District NLD demand the release of prisoners

²⁴ AFP (05 Nov 06) Myanmar activists hold peace vigil

²⁵ Mizzima News (13 Nov 06) Mixed reaction over Gambari's Burma visit; Mizzima News (11 Nov 06) Gambari meets Aung San Suu Kyi

between the regime and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the release of her and other political prisoners.²⁶

- **28 November:** the NLD called on the UN Security Council to adopt a binding resolution on Burma.²⁷

Student leaders jailed

Following the successful conclusion of the signature campaign and the “white expression” campaign in October, the 88 generation students once again managed to peacefully gather activists and ordinary citizens across Burma during the week-long “multi religious prayer” campaign, which ended on 4 November. The campaign called for a peaceful resolution of the country’s political crisis and the release of all political prisoners.

As the prayer campaign gained momentum, the junta showed increasing signs of nervousness. SPDC authorities initially pressured religious organizations in an attempt to prevent participants from holding prayers.²⁸ Eventually the regime resorted to outright threats against the campaign’s organizers. “If their movement harms the peace and tranquility of the state and leads towards unrest in the country, we will take action - not only prevention, but detention and questioning,” SPDC Information Minister Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan said at a press conference on 2 November.²⁹

Threats were quickly followed by action. On 6 November, Min Ko Naing, Min Zeya, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, and Pyone Cho, the five 88 generation student leaders arbitrarily arrested in September by the police, were charged in absentia at the Bahan Township court in Rangoon under article 5J of the Emergency Provision Act.³⁰ On 20 November, the same court extended until 4 December their remand order. The five activists reportedly remain detained at Aung Thapyay police holding center in Rangoon.³¹

New administrative system

The SPDC is pushing ahead with a reform of its administrative system at the local level throughout Burma. The new system is aimed at replacing community-elected village headmen with administrators imposed by local military authorities and selected mainly among USDA members.

Training for new village administrators was underway in November in southern Arakan State’s Townships of Thandwe and Taungup. However, 65 of the 230 new village administrators in Taungup did not show up for the mandatory training.³² Trainings were also held in Maungdaw Township, northern Arakan State, where sessions were conducted by officials from the SPDC Army, Nasaka, Police, Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) and District Peace and Development Council (DPDC). Trainees had been selected by Nasaka and USDA among candidates between 25 to 45 years of age holding higher education qualifications.³³

On 5 November, in the town of Three Pagoda Pass, Karen State, SPDC authorities rejected candidates proposed by local people and instead handpicked the new ward headmen during a meeting attended by only about 30 villagers under the observation of officials from the SPDC Army, Police Force, and Intelligence Service.³⁴

²⁶ Irrawaddy (14 Nov 06) Burma Celebrates National Day

²⁷ Irrawaddy (28 Nov 06) Burmese opposition calls for UN Security Council action

²⁸ BBC Burmese Service (04 Nov 06) Burma’s NGOs face pressure from the government

²⁹ AFP (02 Nov 06) Myanmar threatens crackdown on democracy activists

³⁰ Mizzima News (09 Nov 06) Min Ko Naing, four others charged under 5J: 88 leaders

³¹ Irrawaddy (21 Nov 06) Activists’ Detention Extended

³² Narinjara News (02 Nov 06) Sixty five new village administrators avoid SPDC training

³³ Kaladan News (08 Nov 06) SPDC recruits and trains new village administrators

³⁴ Kaowao News (08 Nov 06) SPDC handpicks TTP ward headmen

Corruption among SPDC rampant

On 10 November, state media reported that the military charged 1,247 civil servants over corruption. The New Light of Myanmar quoted Prime Minister Soe Win as saying on 4 November that the junta had taken action against the civil servants throughout 2005 and 2006 "in accordance with the law".³⁵ Despite the loudly announced crackdown, Burma remains one of the world's most corrupted countries. According to Berlin-based Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perception Index released on 6 November, Burma rates second to last in a ranking covering 163 countries.³⁶

The SPDC crackdown did not spare the regime's high echelons. According to unconfirmed reports deputy minister for Immigration and Population, Maj-Gen Aung Kyi and deputy minister for labor Brig-Gen Win Sein were arrested for corruption and held at an unknown location. The head of the SPDC's National Defense College in Rangoon Maj-Gen Moe Hein was also reported to have been arrested and put under investigation for corruption and abuse of power.³⁷

In addition, at the end of November than 60 officials from the Customs Department were arrested in countrywide raids. The junta issued warrants for the arrest of 114 officials, 61 of whom were detained. Among those arrested was the Custom Department and Border Trade's deputy director-general in the Shan State border town of Tachilek, Win Swe.³⁸

As part of the junta's supposed counter-corruption campaign, the New Light of Myanmar advertised that the Ministries of Home Affairs, Energy, Finance, and Forestry created hot lines to receive public complaints about corruption or any other abuses by their employees.³⁹ However, the junta's hotlines appear to be a method of entrapping complainants instead of investigating cases of corruption. In November it was reported that a USDA member and a primary school principal from Bogalay Township, Irrawaddy Division were sentenced to two years in prison on unknown charges after filing a corruption complaint against local authorities.⁴⁰ "If you really go and complain they'll just give you back a lot of harsh time. [...] So this new program is like a big joke to people," commented Rangoon-based lawyer Tin Win.⁴¹

Karen State offensive continues

With the advent of the dry season, the regime intensified its military offensive in Eastern Burma. The SPDC Army amassed additional troops in northern Karen State and Pegu Division. SPDC Army's Light Infantry Battalion 233 and 552 based in Buthidaung, Arakan State, left for the frontlines in Karen State on 27 October and 1 November respectively.⁴² Reports from Toungoo District, Pegu Division, detailed atrocities committed by SPDC Army soldiers against innocent civilians in the area. The increased presence of SPDC Army soldiers also resulted in the destruction of property, displacement of villagers, and laying of landmines.

• Killings

- **1 November:** Saw They Shur, a villager from Play Hta Village, near Hoki, was burned alive in his home by SPDC Army soldiers.⁴³
- **4 November,** Saw Kyor, 45, and Pa Ree Say, 19, two villagers from Toungoo District, were killed by SPDC Army troops from battalion 35 of Light Infantry Division 66.⁴⁴

³⁵ NLM (08 Nov 06) People can make complaints about malpractices of personnel of Ministry of Home Affairs

³⁶ AFP (06 Nov 06) Haiti, Myanmar and Iraq most corrupt: Transparency International

³⁷ Irrawaddy (15 Nov 06) Head of military college arrested

³⁸ Irrawaddy (29 Nov 06) Fifty customs officials arrested in new police sweep

³⁹ NLM (08 Nov 06) People can make complaints about malpractices of personnel of Ministry of Home Affairs; China Post (18 Nov 06) Myanmar promotes hot lines for public to report graft; Xinhua (21 Nov 06) More Myanmar ministry invites public complaints of misconduct; NLM (24 Nov 06) Ministry of Forestry strives to offer correct and efficient services to the public, welcomes complaints about malpractice

⁴⁰ DVB (21 Nov 06) Irrawaddy residents jailed after corruption complaints

⁴¹ DVB (21 Nov 06) Irrawaddy residents jailed after corruption complaints

⁴² Narinjara News (05 Nov 06) Two Buthidaung based battalions leave for Karen frontline

⁴³ Free Burma Rangers (07 Nov 06) Man Burned Alive by Burma Army troops as they Burn his Village Down, 1 Nov. 2006

⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (10 Nov 06) Junta Attacks on Karen Continue during Gambari Visit

- **14 November:** SPDC Army soldiers killed Tin Aye, 34, from Paw Pi Dor village, Mon Township, Nyaunglebin District, Karen State.⁴⁵
- **IDPs**
 - According to the Karen Office of Relief and Development, a further 3,000 refugees were expected to arrive at the Thai border in November, because of food shortages and ongoing violence.⁴⁶
- **Landmines**
 - **3 November:** SPDC Army troops laid an unknown number of landmines following an attack on Nwa Lay Ko village, Mon Township, Karen State. When villagers returned to their homes, some of them reportedly stepped on the landmines.
 - **7 November:** Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers removed nine landmines in Nwa Hta village and three landmines in Thay Kay Lu village, Mon Township, which had been planted by the SPDC Army.⁴⁷

HUMAN RIGHTS

Prison visits: ICRC out, USDA in

On 10 November, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that talks with the SPDC on resuming prison visits in Burma had stalled.⁴⁸ Moreover, the SPDC Ministry of Home Affairs ordered the ICRC to close five field offices in Mandalay, Moulmein (Mon State), Pa-an (Karen State), Taunggyi and Kengtung (Shan State) and to manage field operations from Rangoon.⁴⁹ As a result, ICRC field operations across Burma came to a halt.⁵⁰ "We are in a situation where we cannot carry out our mandate as granted to us by the international community," said ICRC spokeswoman Claudine Haddad. "We will have to reduce our activities further," she added.⁵¹

Meanwhile, junta-sponsored organizations promptly stepped in to fill the void left by the ICRC in an attempt by the SPDC to show the international community that Burma has no need for further ICRC involvement in monitoring prisons condition in the country.

- **6 November:** the New Light of Myanmar reported that the chairperson of the Prisons Department Maternal and Child Welfare Association donated clothes and milk powder to three female prisoners who had given birth in Rangoon's Insein Prison. The previous week members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) were reported to have donated water purifiers, food, medicine and food to prisoners in Myitkyina, Kachin State.⁵² In Mandalay, USDA members reportedly visited families of political prisoners to show them recent pictures of their detained relatives and give them money. USDA members also visited numerous political prisoners in Mandalay to assess conditions and potential needs of inmates.⁵³
- **9 November:** officials from a junta-backed social organization known as the Association of Public Relations (ARP) visited inmates at Pyapon Prison in Irrawaddy Division. The group was said to have donated 100 disposable syringes. ARP had reportedly been trying to establish contact with several families of political prisoners in Mandalay and Rangoon.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Free Burma Rangers (17 Nov 06) Photos and Update of Burma Army Attacks in Nyaunglebin and Toungoo Districts, Karen State

⁴⁶ Irrawaddy (10 Nov 06) Junta Attacks on Karen Continue during Gambari Visit

⁴⁷ Free Burma Rangers (15 Nov 06) Update on Attacks in Nyaunglebin District, Western Karen State

⁴⁸ AFP (10 Nov 06) Red Cross talks with Myanmar authorities stalled: ICRC

⁴⁹ DVB (17 Nov 06) ICRC forced to stop more Burma activities; AFP (10 Nov 06) Red Cross talks with Myanmar authorities stalled: ICRC

⁵⁰ AFP (10 Nov 06) Red Cross talks with Myanmar authorities stalled: ICRC

⁵¹ Swissinfo (27 Nov 06) ICRC forced to close field offices in Myanmar

⁵² Irrawaddy (08 Nov 06) Rights Group Concerned by Pro-Junta Social Organizations

⁵³ Irrawaddy (08 Nov 06) Rights Group Concerned by Pro-Junta Social Organizations

⁵⁴ Irrawaddy (21 Nov 06) Pro-Junta Social Group Claims Improvements in Burma's Prisons

- **10 November:** members of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Organization, the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, and the Myanmar Red Cross Society visited Loikaw jail, Karenni State. The officials reportedly donated cash to inmates and helped them send letters to their families.⁵⁵
- **21 November:** another social organization donated medicines valued at 300,000 kyat to Insein Prison.
- **25 November:** a medical team reportedly provided treatment to 16 inmates in the same jail.⁵⁶

ILO considers referring Burma to International Court of Justice

As the ILO convened its Governing Body in November in Geneva, the SPDC had failed to address and resolve forced labor issues raised by the ILO in June. Negotiations with the government "have not led to any result, and we are wondering whether the government is negotiating in good faith," ILO Deputy Director Kari Tapiola said.⁵⁷ On 15 November, the ILO's governing body committed itself to further action. The ILO will now prepare the ground to submit a question on Burma to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its next Governing Body meeting in March.⁵⁸ According to Richard Horsey, ILO liaison officer for Burma, the ILO also resolved to provide information about Burma's conduct to the UN Security Council.⁵⁹

DISPLACEMENT

Burmese work permits under new Thai leadership

Meeting for the first time on the sidelines of the ASEAN – China meeting in Nanning, the newly installed Thai PM Surayud told Soe Win on 1 November that he wants to end the problems of migrant workers in Thailand.⁶⁰ According to the Thai Ministry of Labor, 17,000 applications from workers already in Thailand were processed under the latest guidelines, and only 7 rejected.⁶¹

On the Burma side of the border, the New Light of Myanmar reported that the SPDC opened offices in Myawaddy, Kawthong and Tachilek on 6 November to provide temporary papers for migrant workers. According to applicants, rules and fees are being applied differently in each location, with Tachilek only accepting men, and only men between the ages of 18 and 25.⁶² The Thai offices on the other side of the border needed to verify applications are yet to open.

Thai ministry officials are also discussing lifting the ban on those registered in camps working by March 2007. A senior official has said that the change is in order that refugees may be equipped with professional skills necessary for settlement in third countries.⁶³

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Bush tells ASEAN leaders to pressure Burma's military regime on democratic reforms

On 18 November, US President George W. Bush met with Southeast Asian leaders on the sidelines of an annual APEC summit in Vietnam. According to an official with the Philippine government, Bush told the seven ASEAN leaders that the conditions in Burma were "totally unacceptable," and urged them to do more to help restore democracy.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ NLM (22 Nov 06) Members of local social organizations visit Loikaw Jail

⁵⁶ Irrawaddy (27 Nov 06) Burmese Junta Orders ICRC Operations Closed

⁵⁷ IHT (16 Nov 06) Myanmar a step closer to being referred to World Court for forced labor: ILO

⁵⁸ Irrawaddy (16 Nov 06) ILO to Seek International Court of Justice Ruling on Burma

⁵⁹ IHT (16 Nov 06) Myanmar a step closer to being referred to World Court for forced labor: ILO

⁶⁰ Bangkok Post (01 Nov 06) PM hopes for progress on illegals

⁶¹ Irrawaddy (15 Nov 06) Burmese officials issue temporary passports for migrants

⁶² Irrawaddy (15 Nov 06) Burmese officials issue temporary passports for migrants

⁶³ Thai Press (21 Nov 06) Thailand government may lift law prohibiting displaced persons from Myanmar (Burma) to work in Thailand

⁶⁴ Zeenews.com (18 Nov 06) Bush prods SE Asia to pressure Myanmar, welcomes Thai reforms

US to pursue UN resolution on Burma - Bolton

After a closed-door session of the 15-member UNSC on 27 November, US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton announced that the US is preparing a draft UNSC resolution calling Burma's activities "a threat to international peace and security." Bolton stated that the proposed measure would not call for sanctions against Burma. "The policies the (Myanmar) government has been pursuing continue to contribute to the instability in the region and therefore, in our view, constitute a threat to international peace and security," Bolton said.⁶⁵ Bolton said that he expected to produce a text "within the next few days or weeks."⁶⁶

Thailand's new Prime Minister visits Burma

On 23 November, Thai PM Surayud Chulanont arrived in Naypyidaw on a one-day goodwill visit.⁶⁷ During the visit, Surayud paid a courtesy call on SPDC Chair, Sr Gen Than Shwe, and held formal discussions with SPDC PM Gen Soe Win. Thai government spokesperson, Yongyuth Mayalarp, said that Surayud assured the SPDC of Thailand's commitment to bilateral investment cooperation in a transparent manner.⁶⁸

ECONOMY

| Prices for basic commodities in November | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Product | Price | Earlier 2006 |
| Onions | 1630 kyat/kg | 310 kyat/kg |
| Rice (Chin State) | 220 kyat/kg | 150 kyat/kg |
| Betel | 3070 kyat/kg | 920 kyat/kg |

Source: Mizzima News and Narinjara News– price rises mostly attributed to flood damage and transport problems

| Communications Infrastructure | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Mobile phones | 513,301 |
| Internet users | 300,000 |

Source: Xinhua

Thailand to reduce energy dependence on Burma

On 10 November, Thailand's recently installed Energy Minister Piyasvati Amranand announced that Thailand will be reducing energy dependence on Burmese gas supplies and electricity from dam schemes.⁶⁹

According to Piyasvati, Thailand will reduce its natural gas use from 70% of supply to 40%. Currently, 1/3 of that gas is coming from Burmese offshore wells.⁷⁰ Thai energy investments in Burma amounted to US\$6.03 billion in the April 2005-March 2006 fiscal year, making up the vast majority of total foreign direct investment in Burma, which is US\$6.07 billion, according to SPDC figures.⁷¹

| Investment | | |
|------------------------|-------|------------------|
| FDI | 04/05 | US\$138 million |
| FDI | 05/06 | US\$6.07 billion |
| Thai energy investment | 05/06 | US\$6.3 billion |

Source: Bangkok Post

| | Fiscal year Apr-Mar | Quantity/price |
|----------------------|------------------------|---|
| Crude Oil Production | 05/06 | 7.3962 million barrels |
| Gas Production | 05/06 | 11.45 billion cubic meters |
| Gas exports | 05/06 | 9.138 billion cubic metres/US\$1billion |
| Fuel imports | Aug/Sep 06 | US\$520 million |

Source: Xinhua

Burma not meeting its own energy needs

Meanwhile, Burma's internal energy crisis continues. Latest Ministry of Commerce figures put imports of fuel (including petrol and diesel) at record highs – US\$520 million-worth in August and September, exceeding total yearly imports of the past two years.⁷²

⁶⁵ UPI (27 Nov 06) U.S. to seek Myanmar resolution in U.N.

⁶⁶ Reuters (27 Nov 06) US wants UN Council action against Myanmar's junta

⁶⁷ Xinhua (23 Nov 06) Thai PM visits Myanmar

⁶⁸ Xinhua (24 Nov 06) Thailand, Myanmar pledge to continue cooperation in all areas

⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (10 Nov 06) Burma to Lose Out in Thai Energy Industry Shake-up

⁷⁰ Irrawaddy (10 Nov 06) Burma to Lose Out in Thai Energy Industry Shake-up

⁷¹ Bangkok Post (14 Nov 06) Thai companies active in investment in energy projects in Myanmar

⁷² Xinhua (15 Nov 06) Myanmar imports large amount of fuel in two consecutive months

SPDC unpaid debts

On 23 November, China's Assistant Minister of Commerce Chen Jian granted a debt exemption to the SPDC and established a framework agreement for a preferential loan. According to a Chinese official, the debt cancellation 240 million yuan (US\$30 million) and the low interest loan was 300 million yuan (US\$38 million).⁷³ Chen Jian was in the country from 20 November, discussing timber, mining and agricultural cooperation.

China can afford to be generous. According to the latest Chinese official statistics, in the first half of 2006, total bilateral trade was up 10.8% from the same period in 2005. However, Chinese exports were up 30.5% to US\$549 million, whereas their imports from Burma were down 35.9% to US\$114 million.⁷⁴

| China – Burma Trade | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| Total | Fiscal 05/06 | US\$1.2 billion | ↑ 5.6% |
| China Exports | First half 2006 | US\$549 million | ↑ 30.5% |
| China Imports | First half 2006 | US\$114 million | ↓ 35.9% |
| Source: Xinhua | | | |

On 23 November, Soe Win asked newly installed Thai PM Surayud Chulanont to extend their repayment of a four billion baht (US\$109.6 million) loan by one year. Interest on the loan was expected to reach two billion baht in 2006.

[See Thailand's New Prime Minister Visits Burma]

Suryayud replied to the SPDC that he would be leaving the decision up to the bank that made the loan.⁷⁵

| Alternative Income Revenue for the SPDC | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Estimated takings at Than Shwe's daughters wedding | Property, mansions, businesses, foreign currency, diamonds | US\$50 million | Mizzima News |
| Potential amount Burma could earn by cutting deforestation rate in carbon offset emissions schemes | Teak, Padauk, and others | Between US\$128 million-\$1.8 billion | Moongabay |

Sale of Gold Mine

The SPDC's first privatization of a gold mine is going ahead with no interest from outside investors. Eight local bids for the Kyaukpahato mine in central Sagaing Division were received in time for the 10 November deadline.⁷⁶ Other investors may have been discouraged by the strange conditions the SPDC had placed on bids. For 10-year operation of the country's largest mine, bids started at US\$2 million, plus a security deposit of nearly US\$800,000, and a requirement that investors provide the SPDC with a 12.5kg gold bar every month, and 10% of all additional production. Under the operation of Myanmar Mining Enterprise-2, the mine has a monthly output of 19kg.⁷⁷

NOVEMBER CHRONOLOGY

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| 1 | The SPDC Army's Light Infantry Battalion 552 based in Buthidaung, Arakan State, leaves for the frontlines in Karen State. |
| 1 | NLD members in Meikhtila, Mandalay Division, demand the immediate release of political activists Win Ko and Phyo Zaw Latt during their monthly meeting. |
| 1 | A villager from Play Hta Village, near Hoki, Toungoo District, Karen State, is burned alive in his home by SPDC Army soldiers. |
| 1 | A group of 34 Rakhine persons with alleged ties to the National Unity Party of Arakan appeared in Calcutta High Court, India. The 34 have been detained since 1998. |
| 2 | 408 men and women from Rangoon arrive in Buthidaung, Arakan State, to settle in "model villages" on confiscated land. |
| 2 | SPDC police chief Maj. Gen. Khin Yee says that the five former student activists held without charge since late September have links with illegal organizations and terrorist groups. |

⁷³ AP (24 Nov 06) China grants Myanmar partial debt relief

⁷⁴ Xinhua (23 Nov 06) China, Myanmar sign economic, trade cooperation agreements

⁷⁵ Irrawaddy (24 Nov 06) Burma Asks Thailand for More Time to Repay Loan

⁷⁶ AFX News (13 Nov 06) No foreign firms bidding for Myanmar gold mine; 8 local cos vying – official

⁷⁷ Xinhua (18 Oct 06) Myanmar to privatize largest gold mine for first time

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| 2 | Burma's military junta threatens to crack down on activists who have been campaigning for the release of the nation's estimated 1,100 political prisoners. |
| 2 | SPDC Police Chief Brigadier-General Khin Yi dismisses allegations that prisoner Thet Win Aung died of torture. |
| 4 | SPDC Army troops from battalion 35 of Light Infantry Division 66 kill two villagers in Taungoo District, Pegu Division. |
| 4 | More than 150 pro-democracy activists including NLD members hold a peace vigil in Rangoon. |
| 4-5 | SPDC permits a North Korean cargo ship in distress to anchor at a port. |
| 5 | Interra Resources suspends its drilling program, awaiting payments from the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprises of US\$4.4 million. |
| 5 | SPDC local authorities in the town of Three Pagodas Pass, Karen State, handpick the new ward headmen. |
| 6 | Former student leaders Min Ko Naing, Min Zeya, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, and Pyone Cho are charged under article 5J of the Emergency Provision Act in absentia at the Bahan Township court in Rangoon. |
| 6 | SPDC opens offices in Myawaddy, Tachilek and Kawthaung to issue temporary travel documents who want to work in Thailand. |
| 7 | SPDC Army troops from battalion 35 of Light Infantry Division 66 destroy property of Karen villagers in Taungoo District, Pegu Division valued at more than 2.2 million kyat. |
| 7 | Lao PM Bouasone Bouphavanh arrives at Naypyidaw for a three-day goodwill visit to Burma in a bid to promote bilateral and regional ties. |
| 7 | Royal Thai embassy in Burma imposes new restrictions on Burma nationals applying for Thai visas. |
| 8 | The Shan State Army base at Loi Maiyommen is hit by three 81-mm mortar shells by SPDC Army Light Infantry Battalion 331. |
| 8 | 500 refugees riot in Mae La camp on the Thai-Burma border. Three people are arrested and property is damaged. |
| 9 | UN Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari begins his four-day visit to Burma. |
| 9 | Australia's Danford Equities Corporation signs a production-sharing contract with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise for oil and gas exploration at the Yetgun East Block. |
| 9 | OPEC grants a US\$12.3 million loan to Burma's edible oil sector, to be implemented through FAO and with a contribution of US\$2.7 million from the SPDC. |
| 10 | The International Committee of the Red Cross says that talks over prison visits in Burma have stalled, adding other relief operations have been halted after warnings from officials. |
| 10 | State media report that Burma's regime charged 1,247 civil servants over corruption. |
| 10 | Thailand's energy minister announces that in the coming decade Thailand will not rely on Burma for gas supplies or electricity from Burma's dam schemes. |
| 10 | Eight local bids received for the Kyaukpahto gold mine. No interest from foreign firms for the contract. |
| 11 | UN Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari meets with Sr Gen Than Shwe, Vice Sr. Gen Maung Aye, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and members of the NLD. |
| 13 | Activists Ko Win Ko and Ko Phyzo Zaw Latt are both sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment by the Tharawaddy Township Court. |
| 13 | SPDC releases former local NLD leader Myint Aye. |
| 14 | SPDC Army kills villager from Paw Pi Dor village, Mon Township, Nyaunglebin District, Karen State. |
| 14 | Pro-democracy activists in Burma mark National Day with calls for reconciliation, an end to military domination and the release of political prisoners. |
| 15 | Japanese ambassador Nobutake Odano signs a US\$2.65 million grant to support child health care services in Burma in 2007. |
| 15 | ILO confirms plans to seek an advisory ruling from the International Court of Justice on SPDC's continued failure to eradicate forced labor. |
| 16 | Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives an ultrasound medical checkup at her lakeside house in Rangoon. |
| 18 | US President George W. Bush urges ASEAN leaders at APEC Summit to do more to prod SPDC to initiate democratic reforms. |
| 20 | Rangoon's Bahan Township court extends until 4 December the remand order against the five leading members of the 88 Students Generation group Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeyar and Pyone Cho. |
| 21 | As part of his four-day 'goodwill visit to Burma', India Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi visits Naypyidaw attempting to revive interest in the purchase of a package of helicopters, aircraft upgrades, radar and other surveillance equipment. |
| 21 | Rangoon's high court dismisses appeals lodged on behalf of two men sentenced to 26 years of imprisonment for writing and distributing a politically sensitive poem. |
| 22-23 | Meetings between Chinese Assistant Minister of Commerce and the SPDC to agree to three "master plans" for mining, timber and agriculture cooperation. |
| 23 | China's deputy minister for commerce Chen Jian agrees to grant the SPDC a low interest loan and debt |

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| | cancellation, reportedly of 300 million yuan (US\$38 million) and 240 million yuan (US\$30 million) respectively. |
| 23 | Thai PM Surayud Chulanont visits Burma and meets with Sr Gen Than Shwe and PM Gen Soe Win. |
| 23 | UNGA Third Committee adopts resolution condemning Burma for widespread human rights abuses, the ongoing offensive against the Karen, and the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo. |
| 25 | Three men, including a police private, allegedly gang-rape a 14 year old girl at a Pagoda fair in Magwe Division. The three suspects are detained at Taung Twin Gyi jail. |
| 27 | The International Committee of the Red Cross "utterly deplores" the junta's decision to close five field offices of the organization in the country. |
| 27 | UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari briefs UNSC on his trip to Burma. US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton announces that the US would seek a UNSC resolution on Burma. |
| 28 | The NLD and the 88 Generation Students group call on the UN Security Council to adopt a binding resolution on Burma. |
| 28 | A statement from the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges the SPDC to re-engage the ICRC and to find an amicable solution. |
| 28 | UNSC repeats its call for action against the recruitment of child soldiers in Burma. |

REPORTS ON BURMA

“One Year On: Continuing abuses in Toungoo District”, Karen Human Rights Group

<http://www.khrg.org/khrg2006/khrg0606.pdf>

Report on the atrocities committed against Karen civilians by the SPDC Army during the ongoing military offensive in northern Karen State.

“Burma Army Abuses During Current Offensive in Toungoo District Toungoo District, Northwestern Karen State”, Free Burma Rangers

http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/20061113_01.html

Report on the atrocities committed against Karen civilians between August and November 2006 by the SPDC Army during the military offensive in Karen State.

“Corruption Perceptions Index 2006”, Transparency International

http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006

Annual Index that compares country corruption levels in the public service. Burma has been rated second to last for the second year in a row – this time along with Iraq and Guinea, and just above Haiti.

“Issue 1”, Burma Economic Watch

http://www.econ.mq.edu.au/burma_economic_watch

Periodical providing data, analysis, and commentary on the Burmese economy. This issue includes a profile of Burmese banks and a discussion of their recent history, and 3 articles on economic and labor conditions of Burmese living in Thailand.

“Dignity in the Shadow of Oppression: The abuse and agency of Karen women under militarization”, Karen Human Rights Group

<http://www.khrg.org/khrg2006/khrg0605.html>

Documents patterns of abuse against Karen women over the past decade; and tracks women’s implementation of strategies to protect themselves, their families, and their communities.